

Registered Charity Number: 298128

Ropley Society Complaints Policy

Introduction

The Ropley Society is committed to maintaining the highest possible standards of integrity and openness as a charity. This policy applies to all activities of the Ropley Society including its sub-groups such as the Ropley History & Archive and the Heritage Map project. All trustees and individuals serving as volunteers in connection with the Ropley Society's activities are obliged to conduct themselves in keeping with these high standards and shall be made aware of this Policy.

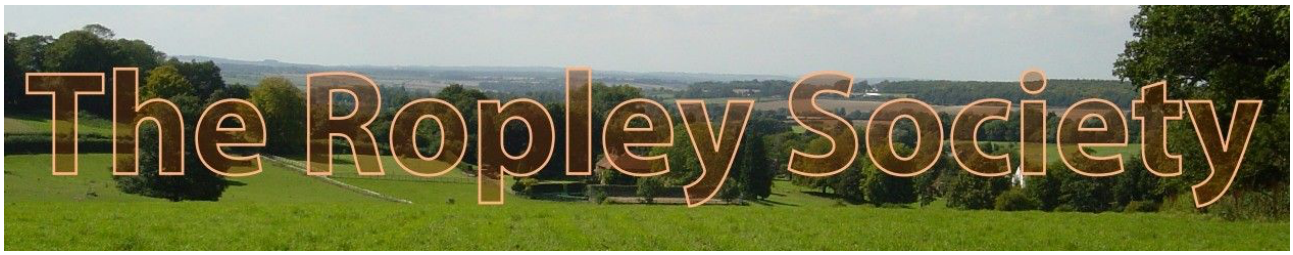
The Ropley Society is committed to providing a high-quality service to our members, grant applicants, event attendees, and the local community. We welcome feedback as it helps us to improve our practices. If something goes wrong, or if you are dissatisfied with our services or conduct, we want you to tell us about it so that we can put things right.

Note on Structure: This charity is run entirely by its Board of Trustees and volunteers and has no paid employees. All formal complaints are handled directly by the Trustees.

1. What Constitutes a Complaint?

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction about the actions, decisions, or services provided by the charity, or the conduct of its trustees or volunteers. This includes, but is not limited to:

- Unfairness or bias in the decision-making process for local community grants.
- Poor organisation, safety concerns, or communication at charity-hosted events.
- Inappropriate or disrespectful behaviour by a charity volunteer or trustee.
- A failure to follow our published policies, including data protection or health and safety.



2. Our Complaints Principles

When handling a complaint, we promise to:

- Treat it seriously, confidentially, and with respect.
- Acknowledge and investigate it thoroughly and fairly.
- Handle it within our stated timelines without unnecessary delays.
- Learn from the outcome to prevent similar issues arising in the future.

3. The Three-Stage Complaints Process

Stage 1: Informal Resolution

In many cases, an issue can be resolved quickly and informally. If you experience an issue at an event or while dealing with information or grants, you should raise it directly with the volunteer or lead organiser present. They will try to resolve the matter immediately.

Stage 2: Formal Complaint

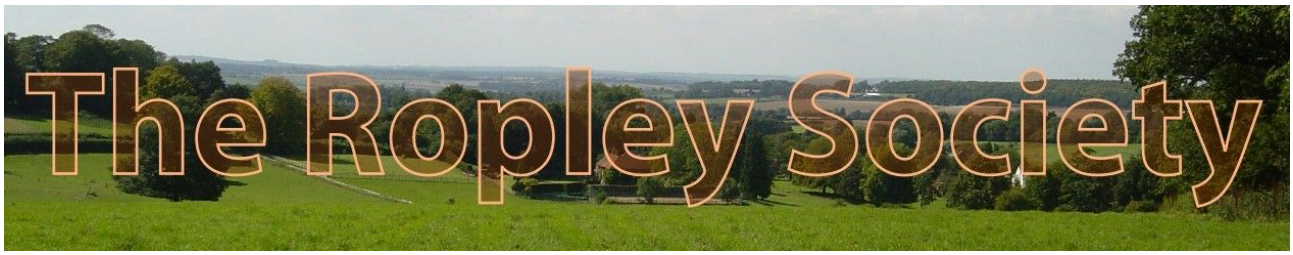
If the matter cannot be resolved informally, or if you feel the issue is too serious for Stage 1, you should submit a formal written complaint. Because we do not have employees, formal complaints must be sent directly to our designated Complaints Trustee via email at *secretary@ropleysociety.org*.

• **Acknowledgment:** We will acknowledge receipt of your complaint in writing within **5 business days**.

• **Investigation & Outcome:** The designated Complaints Trustee will investigate the circumstances fairly. A formal written response outlining our findings and any actions taken will be sent to you within **14 business days** of acknowledgement.

Stage 3: Board Appeal

If you are not satisfied with the formal outcome provided at Stage 2, you have the right to appeal. You must submit your appeal in writing to the Chair of Trustees within 14 days of receiving the Stage 2 response.



The Chair will convene a review panel consisting of at least two trustees who have had no prior involvement in the complaint. The panel will review the investigation files and issue a final, definitive internal decision in writing within **21 business days** of receiving the appeal.

4. External Escalation

We hope to resolve all grievances internally. However, if you remain unsatisfied with the final response from our Board of Trustees, or if you believe the complaint involves a serious risk to the charity's assets, beneficiaries, or reputation, you can contact the regulators directly:

- **The Charity Commission for England and Wales:** For complaints regarding financial mismanagement, illegal activity, or serious safeguarding concerns (*gov.uk/government/organisations/charity-commission*).
- **The Information Commissioner's Office (ICO):** For complaints regarding data privacy, UK GDPR violations, or Subject Access Request handling (ico.org.uk).

5. Confidentiality and Records

All complaints details will be treated as strictly confidential and will only be shared with the trustees directly involved in the resolution process. In line with our Data Protection Policy, records of formal complaints will be securely stored for a period of **2 years** following final resolution, after which they will be permanently deleted.

Review of this Policy

This policy will be reviewed by the trustees at least annually and sooner if there are significant changes to the charity's activities, legal requirements or risk profile. The trustees will record approval of the policy in the minutes of the relevant meeting.